

We will have three sermon/worship series this summer. Today begins a five weeks with the Psalms. The words of the liturgy, prayers and songs are almost completely from the Book of Psalms. Starting the second week of July we will use the letter Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, Ephesians. we will close out the summer with four weeks on the sacraments: baptism and communion.

The Psalms span the scope of human emotion and God's action making them applicable to every life situation and generation. The word psalm literally means "the words accompanying the music." The psalms are likely the most recognized verses in all of the Bible largely because they are used in our songs and in our devotions or prayers.

The Psalms are our words to God, usually asking for help or praising God. And the psalms are God's words to us. As we read, pray and sing the psalms they give words to our feelings and the ancient words connect us to the history of God's relationship with God's people—God's relationship with us. When I pray, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want..." I am joining thousands upon thousands of years of God's people praying these words to our relational God.

Read Psalm 100

The book of Psalms is filled with images the first one is in Psalm 1. The piece of artwork that was at the doors as you walked in was given to me by my internship committee in Tacoma, WA. The artist, Robert Hasselblad, takes the imagery of Psalm 1 and puts it on paper. Psalm 1 says, "those who depend on God are like a tree planted by a stream their leaves do not wither, they

are resilient they can withstand or recover quickly from difficult situations."

Recently I was part of a conversation that reminded me, almost word for word, of a book I have read, A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix, by Rabbi Ed Friedman. In the conversation a group of parents were talking about violence on TV and worrying about its effect on their children. I entered the conversation quoting the book where Ed says, "the more subtle but dangerous message that children get from the average television program is the idea that all questions have answers, justice always prevails, love conquers all, life is unambiguous and that there will always be a hero waiting in the wings to save the day. Anxiety about the external forces of violence in television programs, hides what is really important, inner strength, like Psalm 1 is talking about, resilience—the ability to recover from difficult situations. The everything-works-out message of television is so dangerous because it tempts us to believe life shouldn't have struggles or that life is about avoiding struggle. That's not true! Adventure is essential to life and adventure is part of the very nature of God. Our God is a relational God and relationship is filled with adventure and risk.

God will remain absolutely faithful, but we can and do resist God's will. God is effected by what happens in relationship with us, in Jeremiah 9:10 God says, "I will weep for the mountains." God is adventurous and endures struggles to be in relationship with us. The Bible gives us countless images of God. In fact there are 50

images of God in Psalms alone: physician, teacher, musician; all shed light on God's adventurous nature.

God so deeply enters into relationship with us that the future is not set—or predetermined. God does not control us by keeping us from the dangerous forces and ideas in the world—like Psalm 1 says, God gives us the guard rails of the laws and set us out to adventure with God. Resilience is our ability to bounce back from painful situations and building up resilience requires hard work. Psalm 1 describes the ways of sinners as mocking or looking for the quick fix, the sinners way **doesn't** require the inner strength of nerve, sinners are quick to complain about external forces that victimize them. Remember the example of the violence on TV harming our youth? Those who depend on God, who are in relationship with God, are like trees planted by streams of water, that yield their fruit in due season. It takes time to produce fruit, there is no quick fix, but as we takes risks and adventure through life with God, we become more and more resilient, we bear fruit.

How do we “plant” ourselves by the ever-flowing stream? Play. Play is life-giving and inspires our creativity. Play is what Psalm 1 and 100 are talking about. Robert's art depicting Psalm 1 gets it. There is a leaping playfulness in the motions of the art. There is joy, like described Psalm 100, make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness. It speaks of: thanksgiving, praise, blessing, faithfulness and enduring love. Joy, play, adventure all in the midst of the realities of life. Jesus called us to have faith like a child. What do children do most naturally? Play.

One of the scenes that sticks in my mind from Israel was the day we walked from the place where Jesus gave the sermon on the mount down to the Sea of Galilee, a 20 min hike. This is an area Jesus and the disciples would have walked all the time. And as we reached the shores of the lake we encountered this (picture of stream). Can you imagine Jesus and the disciples playing in and by the water?

I invite you to play with the image of Jesus playing by the water. Is it a wide flat valley with a waving ribbon of blue water? Are the trees young and grouped along the banks? Do the trees shade the bank with mountains in the distance? What do you do along the stream? Fly-fish? Horse-back ride? Relax with a book? Eat a lunch of smoked fish and cheese? What is your play?

Our God is relational. Our God interacts with us through the adventurous spirit. Jesus plays with us as navigate the river of life. The psalms are God's words to God's people through out the ages and our words to God. This week I invite you to play with the Psalms. How will the words of Psalms 1 or 100 set you free to be more adventures and play on behalf of God's mission for the world?